

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Region 7**

Record of Decision

Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has completed the Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan (Plan, Revised Plan, CCP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge, Arctic Refuge). This Record of Decision (ROD) documents the decision of the Service to adopt the Revised Plan and EIS. It includes a summary of the alternatives considered, a discussion of public involvement in the decision making process, and the basis for making this decision. The ROD is based on an administrative record that includes the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan, the Final EIS, and the record of the NEPA process for the development of the Revised Plan. For the reasons described in this ROD, the Service has decided to adopt Alternative E in the EIS. Under Alternative E, lands in Arctic Refuge would be managed under the Minimal Wilderness, and Wild River Management categories described in EIS Chapter 2, Section 2.3. This alternative adopts the Refuge management policies and guidelines presented in EIS Chapter 2, Sections 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5. The Refuge vision, goals, and objectives, described in Chapter 1, Section 1.6 and Chapter 2, Section 2.1, also go in effect under Alternative E. In addition to stating the decision of the Service, this ROD identifies all alternatives considered in reaching this decision, specifies the alternatives that were considered to be environmentally preferable, and identifies relevant factors (including essential considerations of national policy) that the Service addressed in making this decision. The Revised Plan will guide management of Arctic Refuge for the next 15 years or until it is revised.

Background

Under Section 303(2) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA), the purposes for which the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge was established and shall be managed include –

- (i) to conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity including, but not limited to, the Porcupine caribou herd (including participation in coordinated ecological studies and management of this herd and the Western Arctic caribou herd), polar bears, grizzly bears, muskox, Dall sheep, wolves, wolverines, snow geese, peregrine falcons and other migratory birds and Arctic char and grayling;
- (ii) to fulfill the international treaty obligations of the United States with respect to fish and wildlife and their habitats;
- (iii) to provide, in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in subparagraphs (i) and (ii), the opportunity for continued subsistence uses by local residents, and

(iv) to ensure, to the maximum extent practicable and in a manner consistent with the purposes set forth in paragraph (i), water quality and necessary water quantity within the refuge.

Section 304(g) of ANILCA directs the Secretary of the Interior to prepare and, from time to time, revise a plan for each refuge in Alaska. The Plan is based on an identification and description of resources of the Arctic Refuge, including fish and wildlife resources and wilderness values, and must:

- (i) designate areas within the refuge according to their respective resources and values;
- (ii) specify the programs for conserving fish and wildlife and the programs relating to maintaining the identified values proposed to be implemented within each such area; and
- (iii) specify the uses within each such area which may be compatible with the major purposes of the refuge.

The Plan must also set forth those opportunities which will be provided within the refuge for fish and wildlife-oriented recreation, ecological research, environmental education and interpretation of refuge resources and values, if such recreation, research, education, and interpretation is compatible with the purposes of the refuge.

This Plan revision process implements ANILCA; the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997; the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended; other Federal laws, and the Service Planning Policy (602 FW 1-3). According to ANILCA, the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, Service planning policy, and NEPA, the Service must ensure adequate and effective interagency coordination and public participation during the planning process. Interested and affected parties such as State agencies, tribal governments, Native organizations, non-governmental organizations, and local and national residents who may be affected by decisions in the Plan must be provided meaningful opportunities to present their views.

The purpose of this planning process was to revise the Refuge's original Plan, which was approved and adopted in 1988. The 1988 Plan contained no goals or objectives and had outdated management direction. In the Refuge planning process, the Service identified and analyzed significant issues to objectively consider a wide range of approaches that could be taken to address each issue. Three significant planning issues were identified by the Service for consideration during revision of the Plan:

1. Should one or more areas of the Refuge be recommended for Wilderness designation?
2. Should additional wild and scenic rivers be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System?
3. How will the Refuge manage Kongakut River visitor use to protect resources and visitor experience?

Refuge staff developed a range of actions (i.e., different options or strategies) for addressing each issue. The regional planning chief, Refuge manager, Refuge supervisor, and regional chief of the Refuge System reviewed and edited the suite of issues. Lastly, I have reviewed and

approved the issues for inclusion in the Revised Plan and EIS. The EIS includes a detailed description of the three significant planning issues.

The Revised Plan is designed to provide broad policy guidance and establishes management direction for Arctic Refuge for the next 15 years. It describes how the Service will conserve fish, wildlife, plants, and their related habitats, while providing for subsistence opportunities and the opportunities for wildlife-dependent recreational uses. It includes, amongst other things: a vision statement for Refuge management; short and long-term goals and objectives to guide and direct management activities on Refuge lands and waters; and a description of uses appropriate and compatible with the Refuge's purposes and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Revised Plan is designed to be a dynamic, living document that will require monitoring and periodic reviews and updates.

Revising the Refuge's 1988 Plan has allowed the Service to:

- Ensure the purposes of the Refuge and the mission of the Refuge System are being fulfilled;
- Establish a long-term vision for the Refuge;
- Establish management goals and objectives;
- Define compatible uses;
- Update management direction related to national and regional policies and guidelines used to implement Federal laws governing Refuge management;
- Describe and maintain the resources and special values of Arctic Refuge;
- Incorporate new scientific information on resources of the Refuge and surrounding areas, including climate change;
- Evaluate current Refuge management direction based on changing public use of the Refuge and its resources;
- Ensure that opportunities are available for interested parties to participate in the development of management direction;
- Provide a systematic process for making and documenting resource management decisions;
- Establish broad management direction for Refuge programs and activities;
- Provide continuity in Refuge management;
- Provide additional guidance for budget requests;
- Provide additional guidance for planning work and evaluating accomplishments.

Findings and Reasons for the Decision

As explained further below, it is my decision to adopt Alternative E (the Preferred Alternative), as described in the Final Revised Conservation Plan and EIS for Arctic Refuge. This decision includes the Service recommendation of approximately 12.28 million acres for Wilderness designation by Congress (see attached map). This decision also recommends four of the Refuge's rivers be included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Designation of a Wilderness Area and Wild and Scenic Rivers requires an act of Congress.

Adoption of Alternative E reflects my decision that this alternative best meets the Service's purpose and need to manage Arctic Refuge to achieve the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and to meet the purposes for which the Refuge was established. This alternative conserves the fish, wildlife and habitats of Arctic Refuge and facilitates subsistence and

recreation in settings that emphasize natural, unaltered landscapes and natural processes. Arctic Refuge encompasses a wide range of arctic and subarctic ecosystems, unaltered landforms, and native flora and fauna. The Refuge is a place of free-functioning ecological and evolutionary processes, exhibiting a high degree of biological integrity, natural diversity, and environmental health. Alternative E best represents the Service's commitment to implement the Arctic Refuge's vision statement:

This untamed arctic landscape continues to sustain the ecological diversity and special values that inspired the Refuge's establishment. Natural processes continue and traditional cultures thrive with the seasons and changing times; physical and mental challenges test our bodies, minds and spirit; and we honor the land, the wildlife and the native people with respect and restraint. Through responsible stewardship this vast wilderness is passed on, undiminished, to future generations.

Selection of this Alternative recognizes that Arctic Refuge exemplifies the characteristics of wilderness. Embodying tangible and intangible values, the Refuge's wilderness characteristics include natural conditions, natural quiet, wild character, and exceptional opportunities for solitude, adventure, and immersion in the natural world.

In the Refuge planning and NEPA process, nearly all commenters addressed the Wilderness recommendation issue. A primary focus was the coastal plain and the effect Wilderness designation would have on potential oil and gas development there. Section 1002 of ANILCA directed the Secretary of the Interior to undertake a carefully structured assessment of the fish, wildlife, and mineral resources of ANWR's coastal plain. Section 1002 required the agency to produce a one-time assessment of the mineral resources in the coastal plain, which was required to be submitted to Congress approximately five years after enactment of ANILCA. Section 1003 of ANILCA prohibits production of oil and gas from the Refuge and no leasing or other development leading to production of oil and gas from the Refuge can be undertaken until authorized by an Act of Congress. The primary concern of those opposing or supporting Wilderness designation for this area was that a Wilderness designation would preclude development or protect the area from it.

The Gwich'in people and others generally supported a Wilderness recommendation for the area because they felt it would provide protection for caribou and other wildlife. The Iñupiat people and others generally opposed a Wilderness recommendation for the area because they felt it would limit or preclude economic opportunities. There were relatively few comments specific to either the Brooks Range or the Porcupine Plateau Wilderness Study Areas. Most wilderness comments not focused on the coastal plain stated that either all or none of the Refuge's non-Wilderness areas should be recommended for designation. Those supporting Wilderness recommendations said Wilderness status would provide needed permanent protection for the Refuge's wildlife, ecological, scientific, recreational, subsistence, and other values. Those opposing Wilderness recommendations said the Refuge or the State currently has enough or too much Wilderness and that Wilderness unnecessarily limits public access and use.

By adopting EIS Alternative E, this final CCP decision designates areas within the Refuge according to their respective resources and values and specifies programs for maintaining those values. Alternative E, with the recommendation of the 1002 area for Wilderness designation by

Congress, does not propose to manage the 1002 area or any other area, as a “wilderness study area.” Instead, it proposes the continued management of the 1002 area under Minimal Management standards.

The FEIS explains:

While Minimal Management provides similar management tools as Wilderness Management, Minimal Management is an administrative management category that can be changed by the Service through a plan amendment. Lands under Wilderness Management have statutory protection that can only be changed by Congress, and only Congress can designate Wilderness. By recommending an additional 12.28 million acres of Refuge land and water for Wilderness designation, Alternative E strives for a more permanent commitment to perpetuating the Refuge’s natural conditions and processes and wilderness-associated recreational opportunities. However, until Congress makes a decision, the 12.28 million recommended acres will continue to be managed under Minimal Management.

Arctic CCP FEIS at 3-56. This decision continues the Minimal Management administrative management category for the Coastal Plain.

Moreover, the Wilderness designations recommended by the Service would not place any new restrictions on the customary and traditional uses of the Refuge by federally qualified subsistence users. The recommendations for new Wilderness designation are premised on the continuation of the ANILCA provision that allows for the use of snowmachines, motorboats, airplanes, and nonmotorized surface transportation methods for traditional activities and for travel to and from villages and homesites. Further, the ANILCA provision that provides that subsistence uses of fish and wildlife and other renewable resources shall be the priority consumptive uses of all such resources would also continue.

Under the Revised Plan, visitor use will be managed in accordance with ANILCA and within the context that the Arctic Refuge is a nationally important benchmark for wilderness character and visitor experience, with the goal to maximize the visitor’s freedom and independence by employing the least intrusive means of managing use while emphasizing self-reliance, preparation, and understanding the risks of the wilderness environment. Refuge visitor use management activities will focus on the prevention of impacts to Refuge natural resources and visitor experience by preserving the components of solitude and pristine landscapes. Customary and traditional uses of the Refuge by federally qualified subsistence users will continue as provided for by ANILCA.

Refuge staff will work with other agencies, volunteers, private land and allotment owners, and permit holders to identify, prioritize, and restore sites affected by activities that have resulted in localized impairment of wilderness characteristics and visitor experiences. Actions include removing trash, barrels and contaminants, rehabilitating extensively impaired camp sites, cleaning up debris and contaminants around abandoned cabin sites and hunting guide camps, and removing downed civilian aircraft, military aircraft and debris, and spent rockets and debris left by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). To support the research

benefits of NASA's Sounding Rockets Program, the Service would support Wilderness legislation that provides for the regulated use of new Wilderness Areas for rocket landings.

Alternatives Considered in this Decision

Six alternatives were considered, in detail, in the Revised Plan and final EIS. Five of the six alternatives included the proposed goals and objectives and the revised management policies and guidelines described in Chapter 2 of the Revised Plan. The six alternatives considered three significant planning issues: Wilderness recommendations, wild and scenic river recommendations, and Kongakut River visitor use management.

Alternative A: Current Management (No Action)

Alternative A provides the baseline against which the other alternatives were compared. Under Alternative A, the Refuge would continue to be managed according to the direction included in the 1988 Plan and the Refuge's proposed goals and objectives would not be adopted.

Wilderness: No new areas would be recommended for Wilderness designation.

Wild and Scenic Rivers: No new rivers would be recommended for inclusion in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Kongakut River Visitor Use Management: Kongakut River visitor use would continue to be managed with the following practices:

- Group size limits would be required for guided groups (7 hikers, 10 floaters).
- There would be no group size limits for non-guided groups, although we recommend using the commercial limits of 7 hikers and 10 floaters.
- Information on low-impact camping and other best practices would continue to be available on the Refuge website.
- Commercial service providers would continue to have special use permits with occasional compliance checks by the Service.
- Monitoring of physical and social conditions and visitor impacts would continue to occur occasionally.
- Air operator permit holders would be required to land on non-vegetated surfaces and asked to follow all Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) advisories during flight operations.
- The Service would prepare a Public Use Management Plan (as required by the 1988 Plan).

Alternative B

Alternative B would adopt the goals and objectives and the revised management policies and guidelines described in Chapter 2 of the Revised Plan.

Wilderness: Recommend the Brooks Range Wilderness Study Area to Congress for Wilderness designation.

Wild and Scenic Rivers: Recommend the Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning Rivers to Congress for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Kongakut River Visitor Use Management: Under this alternative, and immediately upon Plan approval, we would proceed with two concurrent step-down plans: a Visitor Use Management

Plan (VUMP) and a Wilderness Stewardship Plan (WSP). In addition to the practices identified under Alternative A, we would implement interim measures:

- Expand monitoring of degraded sites;
- Develop new outreach materials with targeted messages;
- Work with guides to reduce visitor volume;
- Work with air operators to disperse flights over high-use areas;
- Publish a schedule of when guides will be launching trips;
- Increase enforcement of permit conditions and Refuge regulations;
- Set an interim cap on commercial recreation guides from 2013 through 2016 or through completion of the VUMP/WSP, whichever comes first.

Alternative C

Alternative C would adopt the goals and objectives and the revised management policies and guidelines described in Chapter 2 of the Revised Plan.

Wilderness: Recommend the Coastal Plain Wilderness Study Area to Congress for Wilderness designation.

Wild and Scenic Rivers: Recommend the Atigun River to Congress for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Kongakut River Visitor Use Management: Under this alternative, management would be the same as under Alternative B.

Alternative D

Alternative D would adopt the goals and objectives and the revised management policies and guidelines described in Chapter 2 of the Revised Plan.

Wilderness: Recommend the Brooks Range and Porcupine Plateau Wilderness Study Areas to Congress for Wilderness designation.

Wild and Scenic Rivers: Recommend the Atigun, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning Rivers, and those portions of the Hulahula River managed by the Refuge, to Congress for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Kongakut River Visitor Use Management: Under this alternative, management would be the same as Alternative B, except there would be no interim cap on commercial recreation guides.

Alternative E: Preferred Alternative

Alternative E would adopt the goals and objectives and the revised management policies and guidelines described in Chapter 2 of the Revised Plan.

Wilderness: Recommend the Brooks Range, Porcupine Plateau, and Coastal Plain Wilderness Study Areas to Congress for Wilderness designation.

Wild and Scenic Rivers: Recommend the Atigun, Hulahula, Kongakut, and Marsh Fork Canning rivers to Congress for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Kongakut River Visitor Use: Under this alternative, management would be the same as under Alternative D.

Alternative F

Alternative F would adopt the goals and objectives and the revised management policies and guidelines described in Chapter 2 of the Revised Plan.

Wilderness: No new areas would be recommended for Wilderness designation.

Wild and Scenic River: No new rivers would be recommended for inclusion into the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

Kongakut River Visitor Use: Under this alternative, management would be the same as under Alternative D.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

The National Environmental Policy Act regulations require that the ROD specify the alternative or alternatives considered environmentally preferable. Guidance provided by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) states that the environmentally preferable alternative is ordinarily considered as the alternative that causes the least damage to the biological and physical environment; it also means the alternative which best protects, preserves, and enhances historic, cultural and natural resources.

We have determined that Alternative E is the environmentally preferable alternative. This alternative was chosen as the environmentally preferable alternative because it does not have any additional impacts on the biological and physical environment and would best protect historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Agency Coordination and Consultation

Consistent with the principles of ecosystem management and the laws and policies for both the federal and state governments, the planning process for the Arctic Refuge CCP/EIS was conducted in close coordination with the State of Alaska. In 1982, the Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) signed a Master Memorandum of Understanding (dated March 13, 1982) that defines the cooperative management roles of each agency. This memorandum sets the framework for cooperation between the two agencies (please see Volume 2 Appendix B). We invited the State of Alaska to be a formal cooperator on the planning process. They declined a formal role. However, ADF&G and Alaska Division of Natural Resources chose to assign representatives to participate as members of the core planning team.

The Service invited the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the U.S. Geological Survey to participate in the planning process. Of these agencies, the BLM asked to participate as a member of the extended planning team. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration requested cooperating agency status to participate in the core planning team.

The Service also consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service endangered species division as well as the National Marine Fisheries Service for both endangered species and essential fish habitat.

Tribal Consultation and Coordination

This decision has been made considering the unique legal and political relationship with Alaska Native tribal governments. The United States recognizes Alaska Native tribes as sovereign governments that are self-governing under Federal law. Under its “trust responsibility” to tribes, the Federal government has an obligation to protect tribal resources and uphold the rights of indigenous peoples to govern themselves on tribal lands. In recognition of this relationship, and pursuant to Executive Order 13175 (November 6, 2000), the Department of the Interior’s (DOI) Alaska Policy on Government-to-Government Relations (January 18, 2001), the President’s Executive Memorandum on Tribal Consultation (November 5, 2009), and the DOI Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribes published in 2011, the Refuge has sought to engage in regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials in the development of the Revised Plan. We have consulted with nine tribes having geographic or cultural ties to Arctic Refuge.

On August 10, 2012, the Secretary of the Interior supplemented the 2011 DOI Policy on Consultation with Indian Tribes with a requirement to consult with Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations on actions or activities that may have a substantial direct effect on Alaska Native corporations, including corporation lands, waters, or resources. Please refer to Appendix B for more information on Native corporation coordination conducted as part of this planning effort.

Public Involvement and Comments Received

Scoping

During the fall of 2009, the Service began reviewing the 1988 Arctic Refuge Plan to determine how it should be revised. The Service found that, in most cases, on-the-ground management actions were meeting Refuge purposes. However, some management direction needed to be updated. New laws, such as the Refuge System Improvement Act, new regulations and policies, and other changes, such as Federal management of subsistence harvests of fish and wildlife on Alaska refuges, needed to be included in the Plan.

We initiated public involvement and scoping in April 2010, informing people that the Plan revision process was beginning and that the Service was soliciting ideas on what issues should be addressed in the Revised Plan. Formal scoping began with publication of the Notice of Intent to revise the Arctic Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan and prepare an EIS, which was published in the Federal Register on April 7, 2010 (75 FR 17763). Eight scoping meetings were conducted in April and May 2010 in Washington, D.C., and the following locations in Alaska: Anchorage, Fairbanks, Fort Yukon, Arctic Village, Venetie, Kaktovik, and Barrow. A total of 94,061 individuals and organizations provided written and oral comments during the scoping process, which were used to identify issues and draft alternatives for the Arctic CCP/EIS.

Draft CCP/EIS

On August 15, 2011, a Notice of Availability and request for comments on the Draft Revised CCP and EIS for Arctic Refuge was published in the *Federal Register* (76 FR 50490). Printed copies of the entire draft document were distributed to State and Tribal governments and CDs were mailed to everyone on the mailing list. The Draft CCP/EIS was also available to review or download from the project website. The public review period ran from August 15 to November 15, 2011.

During the review period on the Draft CCP/EIS, comments were submitted by the public, organizations, and governmental agencies by email, mail, fax, or in person during the public meetings. In addition, public testimony was recorded at six public meetings held in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Arctic Village, Fort Yukon, Kaktovik, and Venetie, Alaska.

We received approximately 612,285 individual communications (an individual piece of mail, website submission, form letter, statement at a public hearing, etc.) on the draft Revised Plan during the public comment period. Of these communications, 1,988 were original statements (36 percent from Alaska) and 610,297 were form letters. A total of 115,466 (19 percent) of the form letters were customized in some way by the sender. A total of 1,305 comments requiring a response from the Service were identified. Only 341 of the communications we received contained such comments.

Form letters were received via email, mail, or on compact disc (CD) from NGOs. The total number of form letters includes an unknown number of duplicate comments. The form letters were provided to the Service in several different formats and each individual communication was counted, resulting in some duplication. Some individuals may also have submitted the same comment several times using the same or different submittal method (e.g., submitting a form letter multiple times, or sending a letter by mail and email).

Of the form letters, approximately 610,000 communications reflected the views of, and closely mirrored language suggested by, advocacy groups, including:

- Defenders of Wildlife, including those submitted through the Care2 website (97,265)
- Greenpeace, including those submitted through the Change.org website (87,997)
- Sierra Club (85,344 in five different formats)
- Natural Resources Defense Council (59,585)
- Center for Biological Diversity (52,915 in two different formats)
- The Wilderness Society (52,770)
- Alaska Wilderness League (49,048 in four different formats)
- Save Our Environment Action Center (42,596 in two different formats)
- National Wildlife Federation Action Fund (24,058)
- League of Conservation Voters (18,060)

- Audubon Society (17,829)
- CREDO (16,078)
- Endangered Species Coalition, including those submitted through the Change.org website (2,788 in two different formats)
- Wilderness Watch (1,143)
- Pacific Environment (815)
- National Wildlife Refuge Association (725 in two different formats)
- Resource Development Council (628 in two different formats)
- Operators Local 375 (205)
- Gwich'in Nation (100)
- Republicans for Environmental Protection (78 in two different formats)
- Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges (4)

Revised Plan and Final EIS

We issued and published a Notice of Availability for the Revised Plan and final EIS on January 27, 2015; the Environmental Protection Agency published their Notice of Availability on February 6, 2015, which started the minimum 30-day public review period. The review period provided the public with an opportunity to understand changes made between the Draft Revised CCP/EIS and the Revised CCP/Final EIS, to see how public comments on the Draft Revised CCP/EIS were responded to, and to learn about our preferred alternative

Subsistence Use Evaluation and Finding (Section 810 of ANILCA)

A subsistence use evaluation and finding of no significant restriction is found in Chapter 5, Section 5.10 of the Revised Plan and final EIS. None of the alternatives, including the selected alternative (Alternative E), contain actions that would reduce subsistence uses or change the availability of resources by altering their distribution, migration, or location; or place any limitations on access to harvestable resources used for subsistence purposes.

Measures to Minimize Environmental Harm

With the selection of Alternative E, no measures to minimize environmental harm are adopted as part of this ROD as none are necessary.

Summary and Conclusion

Arctic Refuge is nationally recognized for its unique and wide range of arctic and subarctic ecosystems that retain a high degree of biological integrity and natural diversity. The Refuge exemplifies the idea of wilderness embodying tangible and intangible values including natural conditions, natural quiet, wild character, and exceptional opportunities for solitude, adventure,

and immersion in the natural world. The Refuge represents deep-rooted American cultural values about frontiers, open spaces, and wilderness. It is one of the finest representations of the wilderness that helped shape our national character and identity.

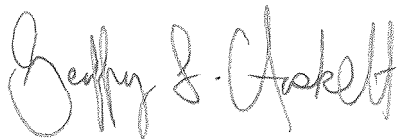
In making my decision I reviewed and carefully considered the relevant issues, concerns, and opportunities, including public input received throughout the planning process, comments on the draft and final Revised Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, and other factors including refuge purposes and relevant laws, regulations and policies.

Alternative E best accomplishes refuge purposes; best achieves the missions of the National Wildlife Refuge System; and best meets the visions and goals identified in the plan. It best provides long term protection of fish and wildlife habitat while providing recreational and other opportunities in a natural environment while minimizing and preventing human caused change.

Further Information

For further information, contact the Refuge Manager by phone at (907) 456-0253, or by mail at Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, 101 12th Avenue, Room 236, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701. Copies of the Revised Plan and final EIS, and subsequent stand-alone Comprehensive Conservation Plan, may be viewed at the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, or online at <http://arctic.fws.gov/ccp.htm>.

The decision to adopt Alternative E is effective immediately.



Regional Director

APR 03 2015

Date

